



2006 AAFSW Secretary of State's Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad

It is with great pleasure that the **Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide (AAFSW)** announce the winners of the **2006 Secretary of State's Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad**. The selection committee was comprised of members of the regional bureaus, AAFSW, the Family Liaison Office and the FSI Transition Center. There were a number of well-deserving nominations; however, only one winner could be selected per regional bureau. The winners are:

Steven Carroll - Kabul (SCA)

While serving a one-year tour in Kabul with no CLO, no employee association and no contact with the outer world, Steve stepped in to help mission morale through contact with the host country. He organized clothing drives for orphanages and local hospitals, created Kabul's first Charity fundraising dinner, organized a large-scale outdoor music festival, and institutionalized charitable donations to orphans and refugees. To raise funds for an orphanage that needed firewood for heating and cooking, he organized a fundraising charity dinner that raised \$1500 for the orphanage. Working with an NGO in Afghanistan, he helped them raise \$2700 to fund book bags given to children across the country, and arranged for the US military to donate 16 containers of surplus food and drugs to the poor.

Kathy Hansen - Seoul (EAP)

An EFM (Eligible Family Member) in Seoul, Kathy has dedicated two years at post to a full range of volunteer services for the benefit of U.S. Government employees through her involvement in schools, hospitals, charity organizations, social groups, military support services and special projects. She is especially valued for her ability to recruit, direct and advise other volunteers in this multitude of community projects. There is not a community that cannot benefit from volunteer energies that Kathy projects. Her motto is one which expresses that no task is too difficult to perform, especially when it touches the hearts of both the giver and the recipient.

Marian McGowan - Santo Domingo (WHA)

Marian has been a dependable volunteer with Jackie's House, a home that provides a safe and nurturing environment for thirty-six children - children of prostitutes, children with mental or physical handicaps, children who have been abused and neglected, and children of parents who cannot appropriately provide for them. She uses her personal resources to teach them English, and has established a network of donors from her friends and family in the U.S. to help support the home. With these donations, she provided paper, crayons, school supplies, and even a television and VCR. She encouraged other Embassy volunteers who now regularly teach English, organize and implement holiday and birthday parties, read to the little ones, and become mentors to these disadvantaged children. Marian's generosity, vision and willingness to go the extra mile have made a difference to Jackie's House and the entire Embassy community.

Nelda Villines - Mbabane (AF)

During Nelda's two years as the Ambassador's Office Management Specialist in Swaziland, she has been dedicating her time, effort, and personal finances to HIV-positive women and children. She has visited schools and hospitals across the country distributing food, clothing, books and school supplies, blankets, quilts and toys. She has involved others in the US and the embassy, encouraging them to give dollar donations or time, visiting self-help projects, and gathering resources to benefit these needy people living in a country where the official HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is 42.6%. She convinced new arrivals to the Embassy to donate their shipping crates so they can be used to build tables or benches for rural community schools. She brought the Minnesota-based "Mother Bear Project" to Swaziland, where she receives knitted teddy bears to distribute to impoverished Swazi children. She and her husband have contributed funds to the schooling of two high school children and three adults for computer classes, so these women could get better jobs to care for their families.

Thomas Yazdgerdi - Athens (EUR)

Tom is a State Department political officer who was serving in Greece when he undertook the charitable endeavors which were recognized by his post. These included organizing the refurbishing of a daycare for low-income children, one of the few places that serve the burgeoning immigrant community in Athens – the Multicultural Daycare Center; organizing Thanksgiving dinner for children at The Ark, an after-school and weekend activity provider in a low-income neighborhood; and organizing a benefit concert which raised nearly \$100,000 for the Katrina victims which was presented to Habitat for Humanity to rebuild homes. While on the board of Habitat for Humanity, he was also instrumental in establishing their NGO tax-free status in Greece.

In addition to the above winners, the members of the selection panel would like to recognize all who were nominated, including:

Lorraine Alexander, Uganda

Sara Sparrow, Luanda

Mari Jenefsky-Titus, San Salvador

Irina Wunder, Lima

Portia Lino Watkins, Tegucigalpa

Ana Patricia Baide, Tegucigalpa

Mairgreg Agen Mahoney, Costa Rica

Gabriela Christioasen, Guatemala

The award ceremony will take place during AAFSW's Holiday Coffee at 10:45 a.m. on Tuesday, December 5, 2006, in the Ben Franklin Room at Main State and is open to the public. The Director General, Ambassador George M. Staples, will present the awards.

We join you in congratulating the winners and thanking those who took the time to recognize and write up the good works of the nominees.